

Message Text

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15

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 FEA-01 AID-05 CEQ-01

CIAE-00 OFA-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 EPA-01 INR-07

L-02 NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-03 OES-03 SS-15 SP-02

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-05 AGR-05 CEA-01

CG-00 CIEP-01 DLOS-03 DOTE-00 ERDA-05 FMC-01 H-02

INT-05 JUSE-00 OMB-01 PA-01 PRS-01 /118 W

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O R 240939Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8448

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR LOS DELEGATION

DEPT PASS AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS AS APPROPRIATE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OAS, SENV, BR, FI

SUBJECT: OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL MEETING TO PROTECT FINNISH
ARSENIC DUMPING IN SOUTH ATLANTIC

REF: STATE 65422 AND 65463

1. SUMMARY. FINNISH GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO REFUSE PER-
MISSION FOR OCEAN DUMPING OF ARSENIC WASTE. WASTE PRESUMABLY
WILL BE RETURNED TO FINLAND FOR DISPOSAL IN SOME OTHER
MANNER. EPISODE HAS EMBARRASSED FINNISH GOVERNMENT
WHICH SEES FINLAND AS A LEADER IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER AN EXTRAORDINARY SUNDAY MEETING OF COUNCIL OF STATE, GOF ANNOUNCED LATE MARCH 23 THAT NESTE OY, STATE-OWNED OIL IMPORTING AND REFINING COMPANY, HAS BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO DUMP AT SEA POISONOUS WASTE NOW ABOARD M.S. ENSKERI. ANNOUNCEMENT STATED THAT ON BASIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NESTE'S REQUEST FOR DUMPING APPROVAL AND SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION BY GOVERNMENT, GOF HAS DECIDED THAT DUMPING MIGHT BE CONTRARY TO GENERAL AGREEMENT CONCERNING POLLUTION OF OCEANS MADE IN LONDON IN 1972 AND POSSIBLY OTHER AGREEMENTS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH FINLAND HAS ACTIVELY SUPPORTED AND WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT.

3. WASTE WILL PRESUMABLY NOW BE RETURNED TO FINLAND FOR ULTIMATE DISPOSAL IN SOME OTHER MANNER. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, M.S. ENSKERI IS AWAITING INSTRUCTIONS IN VICINITY OF CANARY ISLANDS. MASTER IS SAID NOT TO WISH TO PROCEED WITH DECKLOAD OF ARSENIC-CONTAINING WASTE TO PERSIAN GULF FOR SCHEDULED PICK-UP OF OIL CARGO.

4. INTERNATIONAL FUROR ABOUT PROPOSED DUMPING, INCLUDING SEVERAL BILATERAL PROTESTS TO FINLAND AND PLANNED INTERVENTION OF U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL, HAS BEEN MAJOR EMBARRASSMENT TO FINNS, WHO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS AMONG LEADERS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. CRITICISM IN FINLAND OF NESTE OY'S PLANNED DUMPING AT SEA OF THE ARSENIC WASTE HAS BEEN SHARP ALSO. THE COMPANY LOADED WASTES IN SECRET AND DID NOT SEEK GOVERNMENT PERMISSION FOR PLANNED OPERATION. SHIP WAS ALREADY AT SEA BEFORE FIRST PRESS ACCOUNTS APPEARED. AFTER SOME VACILLATION GOVERNMENT DECIDED THAT NESTE OY SHOULD SEEK OFFICIAL APPROVAL FOR THE DUMPING (ALTHOUGH DOMESTIC LEGAL BASIS FOR THIS IS APPARENTLY UNCLEAR.)

5. FOR RECORD, PRESS REPORTS HERE HAVE INDICATED MATERIAL WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN DUMPED WAS IN 690 BARRELS (APPARENTLY USED PETROLEUM DRUMS). IT CONSISTED OF WOOD WASTE, USED FILTERS, COTTON WASTE, CALCIUM OXIDE, AND ARSENIC TRIOXIDE. THE WASTE WAS ALL CONTAMINATED WITH ARSENIC TRIOXIDE. THE ARSENIC CONTENT WAS ALLEGED BY ONE NEWSPAPER TO TOTAL ABOUT 7,000 KILOGRAMS. ANOTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALLEGED THAT SOME OF BARRELS WERE ALREADY BROKEN AND LEAKING. WASTE ORIGINATED AT NESTE OIL REFINERIES AS BY-PRODUCT OF REMOVING CARBON DIOXIDE FROM HYDROGEN BY USE OF POTASSIUM HYDROXIDE. ARSENIC TRIOXIDE IS USED IN THE PROCESS AS CORROSION PREVENTATIVE. NESTE CONTENDED THAT IN THE SEA THE ARSENIC WOULD SOON BE DISSIPATED AND NOT DANGEROUS TO HEALTH AND POINTED OUT THAT OCEAN WATER NORMALLY CONTAINS ABOUT 0.003 MILLIGRAMS OF ARSENIC PER

LITER.
AUSTAD

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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